

CORY GARDNER
COLORADO

SUITE SR-354
SENATE RUSSELL OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

United States Senate

COMMITTEES:

COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION
ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES
FOREIGN RELATIONS

August 25, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write regarding the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program Interim Final Rule (IFR), which, as currently drafted, threatens the industrial hemp industry's potential for Colorado's farmers and seriously undermines this burgeoning industry. I join the growing chorus of my colleagues, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, and the National Industrial Hemp Council in requesting that you use your secretarial discretion to delay implementation of the final rule in order to address several outstanding issues.

The nation's hemp industry was given an enormous boost when hemp was de-scheduled in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. The United States is now poised to transition from being a world-leading hemp importer to a world-leading hemp producer, and many look to Colorado farmers for guidance and clarity for the industry because Colorado is home to one of the longest-running state hemp programs. Since 2014, Colorado's program has grown to include about 2,600 active registrations. In 2019, there were nearly 90,000 acres of registered hemp production in the state. Colorado farmers have been at the forefront of the hemp industry, driving change and innovation across the country. The state carefully balances regulatory oversight and economic support, allowing it to have a thriving industry and be a leader to other states.

I have worked with my colleagues and state officials to share with the USDA Colorado's hemp experience, encourage greater flexibility for farmers, and encourage innovation of the industry. This includes echoing comments submitted by the State of Colorado during the IFR comment period. Despite my communications, there remain serious concerns about how the IFR will impact the Colorado industry.

I appreciate your leadership to the nation's farmers throughout this extraordinary challenging time. Given these challenges, it is hard to overlook the great promise that the industrial hemp industry could provide to farmers if regulation is done in the proper manner. I encourage you to delay the final implementation of the IFR and work directly with state regulators and the industry to ensure workable rules that allow the industry to thrive.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner
United States Senator